

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 12784 011726Z

70

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4389

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

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AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UK

SUBJECT: TORIES DEVELOP HOUSING AS ISSUE

REF: LONDON 12650

SUMMARY: CONSERVATIVE SHADOW HOUSING MINISTER THATCHER HAS EMERGED AS ONE OF THE MORE EFFECTIVE VOTE-GETTERS FOR THE PARTY WITH HER PROGRAM FOR REDUCING MORTGAGE RATES BY CHRISTMAS IN ORDER TO STIMULATE HOME-OWNING. THE RAPIDITY AND SEVERITY OF THE RIPOSTE BY LABOR SUGGEST THAT LABOR SEES HER APPEAL AS A POTENT ONE, PARTICULARLY
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PAGE 02 LONDON 12784 011726Z

IN THE URBAN CONSTITUENCIES. PARTY LEADER HEATH, MEAN-

TIME, SEEMS TO BE HAVING SOME SUCCESS WITH HIS LOW-KEY CAMPAIGNING. END SUMMARY.

1. CONSERVATIVE SHADOW MINISTER FOR HOUSING, MARGARET THATCHER, HAS PROMISED UNEQUIVOCALLY TO REDUCE THE MORTGAGE RATE ON HOMES TO A MAXIMUM OF NINE AND ONE-HALF BY CHRISTMAS, TO HELP TENANTS IN COUNCIL-OWNED HOUSES TO BUY THE HOMES THEY NOW RENT, AND TO ASSIST YOUNG COUPLES TO MAKE DOWN PAYMENTS ON HOUSES OR FLATS THEY WISH TO BUY. MRS. THATCHER UNVEILED HER PLANS IN A PARTY PRESS CONFERENCE LAST FRIDAY AND HAS REPEATED THEM AGAIN AND AGAIN IN WELL-REPORTED SPEECHES, AND IN NATION-WIDE PANEL SESSIONS ON TELEVISION.

2. SENSING THE VOTER APPEAL OF HER PLANS, LABOR RAPIDLY ATTACKED THEM AS EXPENSIVE, AND "ELECTORAL BRIBERY."

MRS. THATCHER HAS SAILED SERENELY THROUGH THE COUNTER-ATTACK AND ANSWERED CONVINCINGLY THE QUERIES OF NEWSMEN.

3. PARTY LEADER HEATH, SMILING APPROVINGLY FROM THE WINGS ON THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE, HAS UNDOUBTEDLY PROFITED BY THE STELLAR PERFORMANCE OF MRS. THATCHER. HE CONTINUES TO PLUG AWAY AT INFLATION, THE PLIGHT OF INDUSTRY, PROBLEMS OF AGRICULTURE, AND THE NEED FOR NATIONAL UNITY. HE CONTINUES HIS RELAXED AND INFORMAL QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS. HIS CONFIDENCE IN THE NEW STYLE OF CAMPAIGNING IS GROWING, AND HE APPEARS MORE COMFORTABLE IN THE ROLE. HEATH IS STILL UNDER SOME PRESSURE TO REVEAL EXACT DETAILS OF WHAT HE MEANS ABOUT A "NATIONAL CONTRACT," THE TERM HE IS USING TO ATTACK LABOR'S SOCIAL CONTRACT WITH THE TRADE UNIONS, AND HE HAS BEEN REPEATEDLY ASKED ABOUT POSSIBLE CONSERVATIVE ACTIONS IN THE EVENT OF TRADE UNION TRUCULENCE. HIS VAGUENESS ON THIS SCORE REMAINS A MAJOR GAP IN THE CONSERVATIVE CAMPAIGN.

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